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PRINCE ERICK.

A SATIRE.

CANTO FIRST.

New York:
AMERICAN NEWS COMPANY.
1872.

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PREFACE TO CANTO FIRST.

In these rhymes I have used the story of the life and death of a noted character, merely as a sort of groundwork; but do not hold myself answerable to any one for lack of continuity or correctness; and in this, and succeeding cantos, I have been, and propose to be, erratic, humorous, pathetic, descriptive, or satirical, just as the humor strikes me; my object being merely to express an opinion of some of the "uses and abuses" of the time. And if these verses shall be instrumental in correcting a single one of the "abuses," I shall be amply repaid for my trouble.

It is possible that some readers will take exception to the freedom of language used in this poem. I can only say that desperate cases require desperate measures; and I have ample precedent to back my "sin." I can also safely say that I have attacked none personally who are not abundantly able to "hit back." A few, indeed, have already favored me with a shot or two across the bow, and, doubtless, still retain sufficient ammunition—in their estimation—to turn my little craft keel upward. Some of those whose names grace (?) these rhymes are introduced here, as Byron has it, "to much better company than they are accustomed to meet," and however censorious I may have been, I dare say, like Sir Fretful Plagiary, they are rather *pleased* than otherwise.

Should the reader imagine discrepancies in dates of occurrences as related here, please remember that this canto was written in June of the present year, with the exception of the eighty-first and four following stanzas, which refer to the "Woodhull-Beecher-Tilton Scandal," and the "Ward's Island Horror."

New York, *November*, 1872.

PRINCE ERICK.

A SATIRE.

CANTO I.

I.

LET poets tune their harps for ancient times,
My theme of modern deeds and days shall be;
And though my muse may roam to ancient climes,
I sing not now for immortality:
But then, my harp is only a guitar,
Whose tinkle scarcely could be heard so far.

II.

This age is said to be satirical;
I deem it more a burlesque of the past,
For naught but a supernal miracle
Can lift it from the slough in which 'tis fast.
I speak of poets—hope I speak no treason—
God knows there's rhyme enough, but little reason.

III.

I'll speak my mind about your modern poet;
In fact, I've several things to say about him.
If he gets angry with me let him show it—
Perhaps, he'll take it kindly, but I doubt him.
But lest he deem me too censorious,
I'll say it was a dream—that's glorious!

IV.

I mean the idea, and not the dream;
Although that also may be glorious—
I can't tell yet, I've only got my theme;
And whether vanquished or victorious
The future proves. And yet I'll go so far
As try to make the play spectacular.

V.

Suppose, then, I am in a dream. That eases
My conscience; (though at first I meant t' ignore it;)
For in a dream one speaks whate'er one pleases.
Without the cost of vouching after for it.
I'll twist my subject to a tale of glory—
Truth reads much better when it's in a story.

VI.

"Beginning with the end I had in view,"
(That's borrowed from somebody, or somewhere;
I scarce remember now—stop; yes, I do—
To filch another's thought would be unfair;
Besides, we'd soon have all the critics on t' us—
The line is in the play of "Pocahontas."

VII.

But Bulwer thinks no wrong if we encroach
Upon the thoughts of others, if we do,
By any means, improve on what we poach—
And, sooth to say, that's just about my view.
But this apology is much too long,
And so I'd best go back now to my song.)

VIII.

There lived (not now, he's dead,) a famous prince—
A prince who reigned in all the pomp of glory;
In short, such splendor never has been since
That raved about in Oriental story.
Though how he got his rank is not now vital—
Here every man's a prince—except the title.

IX.

They call young Grant (in Europe now,*) a prince—
He travels at the State's expense, they say—
They eulogize him, feast him, and evince
Mean, servile natures; for they homage pay,
Not to his genius, but the son of Grant,
Who'd like to be a prince himself, but can't.

X.

This prince came from a village of renown;
(I don't mean Grant, of course—I mean the other.)
His father kept a tavern in the town;
But naught is known, at large, about his mother,
Save that she was a good and kindly matron,
Of Sunday-schools and charities the patron.

XI.

His father also drove a peddler's wagon,
And Erick oft assisted him in trade,
(He was a trader any one could brag on;)
And soon such progress in the business made,
His soul expanded with ambition's fire
To that extent he bought the trade entire.

XII.

He drove four horses now instead of two,
And master of large fortune soon became;
And having fame as well as wealth in view,
Prince Erick's soon grew to a noted name.
He had a wife; but when, or where, he got her,
Is more than I can tell—but 'tis no matter.

XIII.

The last two lines are not in perfect rhyme,
But that's no fault of mine; I'm sure I tried—
You see they're written in the best of time,
And this, I trust, the other fault will hide.
Again, I wander, but I don't pretend
To follow every subject to the end.

* June, 1872.

XIV.

Nor is it my intention here to bother
You further with the Prince's boyhood tricks.
He lived, and ate, and drank, like any other;
But—truth is truth—he *loved* like five or six.
Whene'er a maid—t'was his besetting sin—
Came to the Bath of Love, *he* tumbled in.

XV.

'Tis not my function to enumerate
The loves and lovers of this modern "Juan;"
'Twould take too long. But this I will relate:
He loved them all, it seems, except the true one,
Which was none other than his loyal wife,
Whom he had sworn to cherish all his life.

XVI.

But 'tis a part of my descriptive poem
To show you *one* who saw and fascinated
My hero with her charms, to overthrow him.
Against such charms we should be vaccinated.
And yet the way she loved, and after braved him,
I don't think vaccination could have saved him.

XVII.

'Tis said that she, in youth, had loved and wedded;
And that the twain had dwelt in harmony
Until the demon came which most she dreaded—
The demon feared by many—Poverty.
It came to them, as it approaches all,
And changed their cup of bliss to one of gall.

XVIII.

For still the saying's true, however trite—
Experienced by Christian, Jew, or Hindoo—
When Turpio Egestras doth alight
Within the door, Amor flies through the window;
The bond which links two souls together parts—
'Tis but the old, old tale of rended hearts!

XIX.

But Love, like all things else, must end, they say;
And Dr. Cumming tells us to beware!
The world is coming to an end some day,
I think about December; so prepare!
And yet I question if his doctrine's sound—
How can the world come to an *end* if *round?*

XX.

I know not when or where Prince Erick met her—
I'll not premise, but keep my record clean—
I only know it would have been far better
If he had never dreamed of Josephine.
But lest this narrative should reach satiety,
I purpose here to give you a variety.

XXI.

The woods and fields are bursting into beauty,
The meadows all are dappled o'er with daisies;
The matrons of the flock, in loving duty,
Keep watch while playful lambs thro' woodland mazes
Send bleating music all the ground along;
And in the sky the lark takes up the song.

XXII.

The throstle whistles, and the linnet stops his
Soft melting minor; but the bold blackbird
Speeds on his piercing strain thro' ringing copses,
While, from the distant brake, the quail is heard.
The bluebird perches high to lay his string
Of music-pearls upon the brow of Spring.

XXIII.

Low-growing pines peep over hedgerow stiles,
The hedge bottoms are pied with primrose fires;
Anemones laugh when the day-god smiles,
And hide their pearly heads when he retires.
The apple-trees break into pinky bloom,
And filter through the air a soft perfume.

XXIV.

The em raid velvet of the orchard lane
With golden daffodils is dotted over,
And from the sea-green fields of springing grain
Peep out the cone-like blossoms of the clover;
The blackthorn shows his head above the hedges,
And, pink and white, the May blooms on the ledges.

XXV.

The birds are all love-making in the trees,
The wagtails on the waving grass coquetting
Around the tips of cherry sprays the bees
Impatiently their gauzy wings are fretting.
With music never heard in town or city,
The cuckoo woos in dissyllabic ditty.

XXVI.

The sulphur butterfly wings not his way
In solitude across the flow'ry meadow;
And e'en the cloudlets woo in airy play,
For see how shadow follows after shadow.
The haughty rose, his red brow dewy wet
With pity, woos the lowly violet.

XXVII.

'Mid scenes like this, Young Erick woo'd and won
His bride—no, not his bride; I mean his mistress—
I may be wrong; but as I have begun
I will continue; though, perhaps, I distress
Or shock your ears by giving *her* the name
Which once belonged but to the virtuous flame.

XXVIII.

I have no wish to slander friend or foe—
An inborn decency would scarce advise it—
And I would scorn to copy one I know,
Who writes most rare abuse, and then denies it.
You've taken on yourself too much, McKenna;*
You doubtless deem your *critiques* salts or senna.

* A critique [illegible] N. Y. *Herald*.

XXIX.

And yet I'm not so sure you're far from right;
Although you're not a purgative far from it—
Your *critiques* are so nauseous to sight
They give to men of sense a sudden vomit.
Therein their usefulness—although they rile,
They rid us of our intellectual bile.

XXX.

Ah, God! no wonder times have changed for worse,
When chroniclers to worser passions pander,
Who were unknown until their prose or verse
Reeked with foul blasphemy, or slang, or slander.
Oh, shame! that men should prostitute and ban
The highest gift that God has given to man!*

XXXI.

These critics claim to be in duty held
To cauterize whene'er occasion offers;
They say this rhyming mania must be quelled;
And, yet 'tis known how *they* refill their coffers
With silly author's gold, who buy their glory.
And here I'll stop to tell a little story:

XXXII.

Three little zephyrs met upon a cloud,
One summer evening, when the sun was low;
And sinking down into the vapor shroud,
Each little breeze began at once to blow
A greeting to the others. I've a notion
They put that vapor cloud in much commotion.

* I allude here to the gift of Poetry; although I hold that individuals with souls capable of deep thought, and keen appreciation of the good and beautiful, are none the less poets for lack of ability to impart their thoughts to others. Bulwer says the word Poet, in its proper sense, is applicable to any writer, whether in verse or prose, who invents or creates. I don't mean to intimate that Mr. McKenna is a poet.

XXXIII.

I don't pretend to say they kissed each other—
I was not there to see, but this I know:
Their greeting was as brother greets a brother,
And all with one accord began to blow
Of wonders, sights and sounds, their occupation,
Since they had met there on a former 'casion.

XXXIV.

"While floating o'er the earth," (this was the oldest,
Who here began to tell a tale of travels,
From climes as hot as Hades to the coldest;
From mighty tow'ring mountains down to gravels—
But I've no time now to describe or show 'em,
Besides, this isn't a panoramic poem.)

XXXV.

"While floating o'er the earth," (as said before—
You understand this is the zephyr talking,)
"I met two kings I ne'er had known before,
And what was stranger still—the two were walking;
Which you'll admit was conduct most unkingly,
For kings should never walk—in crowds, or singly.

XXXVI.

"Else why this starving of the lower donkeys
That kings and noblemen may ride in chaises?
And why do crowds of fools, like grinning monkeys,
Send up their faint huzzas and sickly praises
In grudging honor of the very classes
Who keep their noses down like treadmill asses?

XXXVII.

"But, there, I beg your pardon for digressing.
You know it is a zephyr's own prerogative
To raise a breeze; and yet it is distressing
To speak of kings and noblemen derogative.
And so I'll waft this subject from your sight,
And give my story in another light.

XXXVIII.

"Love, seemingly, illumed these monarchs' way;
Yet in the breast of either rankled hate—
A fear that one should have a broader sway
Of power, greater armies, grander state.
It wanted but a match—or much the same,
An angry word or look—to light the flame.

XXXIX.

"Discerning this I flitted down to hell
And gathered seeds of discord near the gate,
And sowed them in the breast of each. They fell
Together with the speed which fear and hate
Begets. Their henchmen joined the wild commotion
And fire and sword swept like a storm on ocean.

XL.

"And on—until all were exterminated—
On roared the battle strife without omission,
And only from exhaustion war abated.
And this *I* did; for was it not my Mission
To show the worms of Earth their lowly stations,
And prove the rule of Heaven over nations?

XLI.

"And yet, perchance, I failed to prove it right.
The battle ceased for lack of men to slay;
The dead were heaped in heaps—a nauseous sight—
None left to heed the lesson of the day.
And this to me is still a mystery:
Each king, that day, blest God for victory."

XLII.

Dear reader, can you see a moral here?
I must confess it might be somewhat stronger;
Condemn not till I make the motive clear:
I've written this to make the poem longer.
The zephyr, though, a moral had in view—
Reserve your judgment, hear the other two.

XLIII.

The Second Zephyr rose and "hemmed and hawed,"
(As members of the Senate Chamber do,)
Until his eloquence was somewhat thawed,
Then told a tale of deeper, blacker hue;
A tale at once so infamous and gory—
But there, I'll let the zephyr tell the story.

XLIV.

"My tale shall not of kings and nobles be,
But of the pious 'Randall Island Priest,'
Whose deeds have gained him notoriety—
A million tongues now speak his name, at least.
But Notoriety's not Fame, I hope;
One wins esteem, the other should a rope.

XLV.

"This pious public servant lived and ruled
Where ocean's tidal wave thro' Hellgate moans *—
Befitting place for one in vice so schooled—
His was a most uncommon name: 'twas Jones.
He had the perquisites and the direction
Of New York's Home for Juvenile Correction.

XLVI.

"While floating idly over land and sea,
From Randall Isle I heard a wail of anguish,
Which roused a curiosity in me
To learn who thus in agony did languish,
And so I nearer drew, and peeped within
That pile reared for the banishment of sin.

XLVII.

"And sharper grew the cries, and higher still
Fierce oaths (profanity is now in fashion,)
Arose, and fast fell heavy blows until
Down sank the victim of a brutal passion.
'Twas but a reformatory infliction
Upon a youth in Jones' jurisdiction.

* Hellgate—a dangerous part of the East River, near New York.

XLVIII.

"To learn, I must confess an inclination—
And all the world, I think, should know no less—
The manner and the means of reformation
Which lead our sinful youths to righteousness.
I learned it from 'Pope Jones,' the 'Grand Inquisitor,'
To whom, not long ago, I was a visitor.

XLIX.

"He turns his youths from sin and degradation
With tortures worse than those once rife in Spain;
Thumbscrews and pulleys are his 'soft persuasion,'
Which oft bring death, and always bitter pain;
And to complete his holy work he wipes
Out every stain of sin with 'Stars and Stripes.'*

L.

"While viewing scenes like this I burned with ire,
And cried, 'For shame upon the perpetrator!'
And, quick as withered grass is swept by fire,
I vowed a lasting vengeance on the traitor—
False to his country's trust, false to his God,
May rest forsake him even 'neath the sod!

LI.

"At dead of night, when he would slumber greet,
His victim's ghastly ghosts are ever near;
Asleep, awake, in lane, or crowded street,
They ever whisper in his frightened ear.
Around him they have wov'n a ghostly spell—
His life's a burden, and his soul a hell.

* It was in evidence, at the recent trial of the boy, Dunn, for the murder of his brutal keeper, that boys, in the House of Refuge, were hung up by the thumbs until they fainted; and were lashed with an instrument of torture similar to the infamous "cat-o'-nine tails," until the blood ran down their backs. This whipping was commonly known among the young convicts as the "Stars and Stripes." One youth died from the effects.

LII.

"And when grim Death shall toll his funeral bell,
I, too, will stand a witness of his sin;
And as he totters on the brink of Hell
I will be there to plunge him further in!
And thus, I've done a zephyr's earthly mission—
I've shown a worm of earth his low condition."

LIII.

But this is language rather strong, you'll say;
But please remember who it was then speaking,
'Twas but a breeze, whose vengeance is but play—
The smallest pig sometimes does loudest squeaking.
You see, I show you faults of brain and quill;
If *I* don't point them out the *critics* will.

LIV.

I'd like to say a word here of the critics,
But can't find words to rhyme them, high or low;
They're not in lexicons, nor metaphysics,
And so I think I'd better let them go.
I'd praise them, but they'd scarcely praise in turn;
And so what fame I get I'll try to earn.

LV.

Then Zephyr Three arose—but not so bold;
And blushing like a maid when first she loves—
For maids do blush when first they love, I'm told.
I've known but few in love, if blushing proves
Alone the presence of the tender passion.
But then, perhaps, it isn't now in fashion.

LVI.

I speak comparatively of the city—
The case is different with country maids.
They are not educated—what a pity—
In all the smirks and smiles, and all the grades
Of coquetry, with which our city lasses
Enthrall, not men of sense, but apes and asses.

LVII.

But this has naught to do with Number Three,
Who just began his story when we stopped him.
I really think *I* should not like to be
"Cut," as we just now impolitely dropped him.
So speak your mind, my Zephyr—fire away,
Your gun may do some damage in this fray.

LVIII.

The Zephyr rose, and said, "My tale is simple;
I've placed on men no ban, no plague, no sores—
Compared with your great swelling, mine's a pimple.
I almost shame to tell my tale—and more's
The pity, that your tales are vaster all
Than mine, which simply is a pastoral.

LIX.

"Yet I'm persuaded simple deeds of love
Are worth some mention in the book of fame;
And ere I've done my tale I hope to prove
That mine, if nothing more, are free of blame.
My prelude's done—as you impatient seem—
Two ragged little Arabs are my theme.

LX.

"I saw them sleeping side by side, alone,
Beneath the shelter of a wildrose tree;
Across her form his baby arm was thrown
As though its puny strength would keep her free
Of danger. He was right—that little arm
Contained the pow'r of love to ward off harm.

LXI.

"Her dimpled hand lay on his grimy breast,
Her face part hidden in a bed of moss;
Her silken hair against his cheek was prest,
And veiled it with a cloud of golden floss.
The sun looked through the parted leaves above,
And gazed in wonder on this scene of love.

LXII.

"I halted, too, and gazed with rapture dumb
Upon the pair, so innocent and pure,
And wondered if, in all the years to come,
This love, begot in childhood, would endure?
And gazing down the vista of the years
Unborn, I saw enough of sorrow's tears

LXIII.

"To flood them where they lay, and bear them down
Into oblivion's ocean, ere they woke.
Could they have known and felt the future frown,
Without the power to avert the stroke,
They'd welcome death in any shape that braved them;
Yes, even that from which I after saved them.

XLIV.

"A mighty serpent glided near the spot,
With glist'ning eye, and coat of varied hue,
And forth his fiery, forkèd tongue he shot
Swift as the lightning. As he nearer drew,
He paused, his gaudy colors to display,
And gazed with greedy eye upon his prey.

LXV.

"Then laying low his slimy, hideous head,
He calmly waited; still his death-watch keeping."
(For serpents of a certain class, 'tis said,
Will ne'er attack a prey, if dead, or sleeping.
This may be fabrication—or still worse—
I care not so it rhymes, and fills the verse.)

LXVI.

"Then quick I vowed to save the sleeping pair;
Just then the sun shone in upon their faces;
'Twas midday, August, and the fiery glare
Made them awake. But as they changed their places,
I hurled a mighty dead limb from its place,
And struck the waiting monster in the face.

LXVII.

"I left the baby pair in peaceful sleep,
Unheeding danger past, or future pain;
I bent a bough above their heads to keep
The sun away, lest they should wake again.
And thus, with love, I've shown a zephyr's mission—
'Tis quite as good as your low worm's condition."

LXVIII.

These are the stories of the Zephyrs Three;
Of course, there is a moral—do you know it?
It is not very difficult to see,
And yet to save you guessing, I will show it.
It means that love, in this cold world of ours,
Is mightier than all the tyrant powers.

LXIX.

If I could make the critics—or but even
A part of them—believe this, I'd have done.
"For charity would lift them nearer Heaven."
So says, at least, the poet Tennyson.
And yet, perchance, the monster—Hydra-headed—
Will blight my lay with *critiques* double-leaded.

LXX.

And since it has become so much the fashion
To slay and scalp one's literary brother,
I see not why *I* should not do some lashing—
I have as good a right as any other.
Besides, I've *my* opinion of some things,
Which may be all the better for its wings.

LXXI.

I've my opinion of the modern poet,
From Cullen Bryant down to Joaquin Miller.*
A few are grand, the rest inane—and show it—
Bret Harte is called a literary pillar.

* I do not speak of Mr. Miller, in this connection, as the *least worthy* of American poets, but simply the last fledged.

Some genius I admit; but how he got
A poet's name, pray tell, for I cannot.*

LXXII.

There's Bryant, Whittier, Lowell, Holmes, Longfellow;
The rest are puppies in a bag—none worst—
Untie the sack, and shake it well, and hallo,
God only knows which one would come out first.
I'd freely back Walt. Whitman's balderdash †
Against Bret Harte's, John Hay's, or Winter's trash.

LXXIII.

Will Carleton's later songs were best unsung,
They scarce evince poetic education—
A youth the bees of Hybla never stung,
Or else "Old Betsey" killed his Inspiration.
'Tis difficult to say exactly which
Is worst, "Home from the War," or "Johnny Rich."

LXXIV.

In wealth, John Hay hath late advanced a stage; ‡
I'm glad to hear that John is doing well.
Thank God! he's spared the poet's heritage—
For genius wrapped in rags is simply Hell.
I would to Heaven he'd sooner got his riches,
We might have been spared his "Little Breeches."

LXXV.

Then there's a mighty host of lesser scribblers—
I'd call them "lights," but, ah! they never shine—
Who lash, and kick, and spur, and groan—the dribblers—
To urge their feeble Pegasus' in line;

* It is but justice to say that I allude here to Mr. Harte's verse. I am exceedingly pleased with his prose stories. In short, I think his prose articles beautiful poems, and his poems very miserable prose.

† "Walt. Whitman warns the American people of his intention to read his own poems in public."—NEWSPAPER. "Are there no stones in Heaven, but what serve for the thunder?"

‡ "It is rumored that the poet, John Hay, recently cleared one hundred thousand dollars in Erie stock speculations."—NEWSPAPER. What a pity he didn't speculate a little earlier in life; he might not then have been obliged to rummage the rag-bag of his brain for those bottomless "Little Breeches."

Well pleased if they can gain a second place;
Yet bring up at the wrong end of the race

LXXVI.

But in these pages let me not forget
Famed Bayard Taylor, and Buchanan Read—
The one all power and dramatic wit,
The other breathing of the clover-mead;
His life was gentle as an idyl's rhythm,
His faults were few, and they are buried with him.

LXXVII.

Just here another subject might not be
Quite out of place—I mean the modern drama.
I really pity poor Melpomene,
The use she's put to is enough to damn her.
Shakspeare has given way to "Lalla Rookh,"
And Sheridan and Bulwer to "Black Crook."

LXXVIII.

"Fritz," "Schneider," "Carl," "Across the Continent,"
And others quite as weak, are now the rage.
Slang, oaths, and legs, are most predominant,
Which helps to elevate the modern stage.
"Black Friday," too, is having quite a reign—
A foul abortion from a morbid brain.

LXXIX.

To these Legitimates, Burlesque is added;
But shapely limbs are here the main attraction.
And yet I'm told that Burlesque legs are padded;
If this were known 'twould be a sad detraction.
And next comes Music with its mawkish tunes,
And Wehli with his comic pantaloons.*

* Mr. Wehli's performances on the piano display considerable skill, a great deal of muscle, and very little music. His chief attraction (?) is the remarkable cut of his pantaloons. And now he proposes a lecturing tour in the United States—in broken English, of course. Alas! Poor country!

LXXX.

But with composers, now, I will not bore you,
I'll say a word of them in Canto Two.
But meanwhile, dear composers, I implore you,
For Heaven's sake! do give us something new.
You drag your brains, and then the best you do by
Us, is to fish up "Champagne Charles," and "Shoo Fly."

LXXXI.

Oh, sweet America! Still not content
With all the blotches on thy sacred page,
Must Slander's Blood-y Geni be unpent,
And Scandal's Goddess—Woodhull—strut the stage?
Oh, Beecher! Art thou guilty? If thou art,
Thy awful fall will fell a nation's heart.

LXXXII.

I will, in Canto Two, elaborate
Upon this strange and scandalous affair;
A history concise I will relate
Of those whose fetid breath now taints the air;
Who fleece the Shepherd and destroy the Flock,
And sacred Virtue make a laughing-stock.

LXXXIII.

And who's in fault for this? Not *they* alone—
But those who *harbor* sin deserve the blame.
The Law, Ourselves, the Nation, must atone—
Who shields a traitor shares the traitor's shame.
And yet no matter how these ghouls offend,
There's one ass left to offer them a friend—

LXXXIV.

The irrepressible George Francis Train
(Of this great man the world has heard too often)
Who would have died of softening of the brain,
Years gone, if he had had a brain to *soften*.
"The nation's hope" ere this is well nigh spent—
He's been so long "the coming President."

LXXXV.

In Canto Second read, with heart of flame,
Of damning deeds by human fiends committed.
Ward's Island aids to swell our country's shame,
Where torturings are by our laws permitted.
If many of the lunatics who run
At large were whipped, there'd be more justice done.

LXXXVI.

For what I've written here, and yet shall write,
Consideration I shall claim from none;
I fear no harm, nor dread cartels to fight—
Alas! the days of chivalry are gone.
So speak or write your mind--and I'll respect it—
Condemn me, if you like; for I expect it.

LXXXVII.

I'll now return to Erick and his lady,
And tell you of their love, their hate, their quarrel—
For I've neglected them too long already;
And here my tale begins to get immoral.
But don't look frightened with anticipation
That I'm about to plunge in dissipation.

LXXXVIII.

I only mean to show that Josephine
Had other slaves of love beside our hero,
And over whom she reigned a tyrant queen—
In short, a sort of modern female Nero.
Although *her* law was far more absolute
Than Nero's Roman will;—and well she knew't.

LXXXIX.

One in particular had gained her heart—
That is, what little heart there was to gain—
A reckless Count; but in appearance smart,
Though what his figure gained he lacked in brain.
But women oft prefer a handsome fool
To one of sense—he's easier to rule.

XC.

Between these two a rivalry existed—
The Prince had wealth, the Count a handsome face.
And, vainly, each the other's sway resisted,
And former love and friendship soon gave place
To inward cursings and vituperations;
Which, in their turn, brought on recriminations.

XCI.

Prince Erick loved his mistress passing well;
He showered at her feet his wealth, his honor.
Count Ruric loved her with the fire of hell,
But had naught else but love to shower on her.
And Josephine—frail one—was nothing loath
To take the sacrifices of them both.

XCII.

She dwelt in luxury—gift of the Prince,
And reveled in the arms of his betrayer.
'Tis sad to ruminate upon; but since
My duty is to chronicle with care
The main events of past and present, I owe
To you a truthful story of the trio.

XCIII.

Fair Josephine reclined in her *boudoir*.
The elements were in a "rude commotion,"
The rattling casement chimed with winter's roar
And mournful sighs came swelling from the ocean;
With never-ending patter fell the sleet
On tower, turret, lane, and lonely street.

XCIV.

'Twas such a moaning, sighing, winter night
One loves to sit alone, in meditation,
Before the rosy glow of anthracite,
(I've oft indulged in such an occupation,)
And listen to the ticking of the rain
Monotonous against the window-pane;

XCV.

Safe, for the time, from winter's biting blast,
Free, for the time, from all the cares of earth,
In sweet, but melancholy dreams of past,
While every dream to newer dreams gives birth.
How bright the future seems to expectation!
But, ah! the future's all a speculation.

XCVI.

'Tis sweet to wander down the golden lane
Of memory, to cull afresh the flowers
Of youth. 'Tis sweet to dream Young Love again,
The union of fond hearts in moonlit bowers—
Two lives together joined by one love-link,
Two hearts that from one cup of passion drink.*

XCVII.

'Tis sweet, but sad, to dream what might have been,
Had Heaven smiled and Fortune been propitious.
Ah! great the curse of poverty, I ween,
To those who madly love, and are ambitious.
But those who've felt the pangs, the pain can tell
Of tasting Heav'n, then drinking draughts of Hell!

XCVIII.

Ah, Fate! Why came you twixt two fond young hearts?
Nay, tell me, not! I know 'twas *Fate* them parted!
Ne'er tell me 'tis a parent's will that parts
The link which leaves two mortals broken-hearted—
But 'pshaw! this dreaming of the past is folly;
Besides, it makes one feel so melancholy.

XCIX.

'Twas thus in dreams reclined fair Josephine,
(I won't stop here to praise her face or figure,)
As fair a fairy as was ever seen,
Although, I must confess, a great deal bigger.
'Twas on a costly sofa she reclined;
And here I bid you, reader, read her mind.

* "Two souls with but a single thought,
Two hearts that beat as one."—INGOMAR.

C.

She leaned upon one diamond-covered hand,
And held a broad, sealed parchment in the other,—
Which paper represented house and land.
You'd think she was endeavoring to smother
Some deep emotion, judging by her air,
And the unkempt condition of her hair.

CI.

To make the matter clear I will explain—
As said, the parchment gave her house and land.
She thus had gained what long she longed to gain:
An "Independence," and from Erick's hand;
And this, no doubt, gave her sufficient reason
For entertaining strife twixt love and treason.

CII.

Her struggles were of rather long duration;
But finally she vowed to mend her ways—
To Erick she'd be true, despite temptation!
And then she hastened to undo her stays;
'Twas getting very late, the housemaid said,
And, turning off the hall-gas, went to bed.

CIII.

But ere she had ascended half the stairs,
A gentle knock came on the outer door;
She knew the rap, as well as the affairs
Of him who rapped—he had been there before.
And so, without ado she let him pass—
Housemaids are rather plenty of this class.

CIV.

By this time Josephine was near undrest;
Her charms revealed made quite a nice display.
That sort of costuming became her best,
For "beauty unadorned"—*et cetera.*
But Josephine, in truth, was rather pretty,
And no one knew it better—more's the pity.

CV.

The looking-glass reflected many glances
Of admiration at her figure tall;
For every decent-looking woman fancies
Her face and figure is her capital
Though Theo. Tilton, Woodhull, and the other
Strong-minded women, think it all a bother.

CVI.

But Josephine had beauty and expression,
And beauty in the sex is quite convenient;
Because the world's inclined—that's my impression—
To view their little foibles far more lenient
If they are handsome; which, upon my word,
Appears to me exceedingly absurd.

CVII.

I never could, nor can yet, understand
Why beauty has a sort of an exemption
From Folly's critic. On the other hand,
Your homely woman's damned beyond redemption;
For let *her* dare to fall into an error,
The world lifts up its hands in holy terror.

CVIII.

Back to my story—for I've been digressing;
But that's a fault I find most hard to mend.
This wandering must be, to you, distressing;
But in my Second Canto I intend
To be, alone for your sake, less the rover;
And happily this canto's nearly over.

CIX.

We'll now go back to Mistress Josephine,
Whom we left looking in the looking-glass.
To tell her toilet secrets here, I ween,
Would be most ungallant—so let that pass.
Besides, the women know; the men might doubt it—
That is, if any cared enough about it.

CX.

I'll merely say that after some undressing,
And admiration, she put on a wrapper,
(Which being loose, was not at all distressing,)
And then sat down to read the Prince's paper.
But during this, and quite a while before,
Count Ruric had been standing in the door.

CXI.

She gave a smothered scream—a very slight one—
When she beheld her lover there; because,
Although his secret visit was a night one,
'Twas perilous—against the Prince's laws.
Her arms were twined about him in a trice:
Of course, "'twas naughty, but 'twas rather nice."

CXII.

What happened after this I'll not relate,
Because the plain, ungarnished truth might shock
Your sensibilities. I'll merely state
That on the door there came a thund'ring knock,
And Erick entered. Josephine was lost in
Surprise—she thought Prince Erick was in Bost'n.

CXIII.

She soon recovered, and assumed a boldness—
It is the usual way, in this fast age,
When caught in sin, if haughty mien or coldness
Are unavailable, to fly in rage.
And this she did, and raised a storm of fury.
(It wouldn't do to have her on a jury.)

CXIV.

She swore—I mean she vowed—that he should never
Have welcome to her home. (The home he gave her.)
Her love and friendship both were gone forever;
She wondered how he had the face to brave her!

In language which ignored both rhyme and rhythm,
She bade him go—and take his gum shoes with him. *

CXV.

And here the Prince's wrath boiled up and ran—
(Not as *he* ran that hot day in July †—
Hot in a double sense—when from the van
Of noble troops the chieftain turned to fly.
But he who fights, and after runs away,
May live to fight—or run—another day.)

CXVI.

But please excuse this short parenthesis—
As said before, the Prince's rage ran high.
He gnashed his teeth. "And has it come to this?
By all the fiends of Hell, the Count shall die!"
But Ruric swore with equal vigor, "Since
'Tis come to this—then this"—and shot the Prince. ‡

CXVII.

Down Erick sank, all welt'ring in his gore.
They feared that he would die that night, and tried
To keep his breath—and did—a few hours more
Until he made his will; and then he died.
He died and straightway started off for Heaven,
Just as the New York town-clock struck eleven.

CXVIII.

Great trouble here commenced—or I misstate—
His taking off was done in such a hurry,
The shocking news got up to Heaven so late
It put the angels all into a flurry;
In consequence of which, when they came on
The earth to get his soul, his soul was gone.

* When the frail, fair Josephine transferred her affection to another, and banished the "Prince" from her heart and home, it is said that he complained to a friend, with tears in his eyes, that "she wouldn't even allow him to leave his gum shoes in her house." *Query:*—Why did he want to leave his gum shoes in her house?—PRINTER'S DEVIL.

† The Orange Riot, July 12th, 1871.

‡ For the sake of convenience I have run counter to history, and had my hero shot in a lady's chamber.

CXIX.

And having disregarded all his life
The admonitions of the few who know,
And willingly point out, through ill and strife,
The straight and narrow way that all should go,
He wandered on, and in confusion fell,
And brought up finally at the gate of Hell.

CXX.

Here let me pause awhile. Perhaps, 'twill grieve you—
This breaking off before I've done my tale.
I'll write another Canto ere I leave you
For aye—that is, if this has ready sale.
If not, you'll never hear from me again;
And yet the thought of parting gives me pain.

CXXI.

But now I've got an interesting start;
And like the story-papers—which have vexed
Us often—when they reach a thrilling part,
They break off with "continued in our next,"
Just so, I think it would be quite as well
To leave my hero at the gate of Hell.

Postscript.

In my Second Canto I propose to accompany the "Prince" through "Purgatory," and take notes by the way; meanwhile making occasional returns to Earth to observe the signs of the times.

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